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ABSTRACT

Selecting the best qualified doctoral applicants for preparation as future counselor educators is one of the most important decisions a counselor education faculty makes each year. Recently proposed by the Association for Counselor Educational and Supervision are the Guidelines for Doctoral Preparation in Counselor Education. The present authors note a lack of specificity in the Guidelines as they relate to selection criteria and propose a basis for those selection criteria. In doing so, they suggest the use of the personal interview as one means of evaluating the criteria, and present a doctoral interview rating scale to be used by counselor education faculty as a basis for that evaluation. (Author/HSE)

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Criteria for Doctoral Admissions: The ACES Standards

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Abstract

Selecting the best qualified doctoral applicants for preparation as future counselor educators is one of the most important decisions a counselor education faculty makes each year. Recently proposed by the Association for Counselor Education & Supervision are the Guidelines for Doctoral Preparation in Counselor Education. The present authors note a lack of specificity in the Guidelines as they relate to selection criteria and propose a basis for that selection criteria. In doing so, they suggest the use of the personal interview as one means of evaluating the criteria and present a doctoral interview rating scale to be employed by counselor education faculty as a basis for that evaluation.

Criteria for Doctoral Admissions: The ACES Standards

Selecting the best qualified doctoral applicants for preparation as future counselor educators is one of the most important decisions a counselor education faculty makes each year. The importance of this decision is evident in view of the lengthy preparation period doctoral students must sustain and the impact this preparation has upon them. Of even greater consequence is the impact these individuals will have upon future students and clients as well as how they will reflect the reputation of the institution at which they received their training.

Recently proposed are the Guidelines for Doctoral Preparation in Counselor Education (Association for Counselor Education & Supervision, 1977). Concerning the criteria for the selection of applicants, Section III of the Guidelines states:

> These criteria should include evidence that the applicant for the doctoral program is committed to the profession of counseling and guidance through successful entry level preparation and experience (p. 2).

What, however, is meant by "successful entry level preparation and experience" is not specified.

The Standards for the Preparation of Counselors and Other Personnel Services Specialists (Association for Counselor Education & Supervision, 1973) as regards the selection of applicants calls for:

> A committee of faculty members makes the decisions concerning admission of applicants to the program based upon established

criteria such as:

(1) Potential effectiveness in close interpersonal relationships.

(2) Aptitude for counseling and related human development responsibilities.

(3) Commitment to a career in counseling and personnel work.

(4) Potential for establishing facilitative relationships with people at various levels of development.

(5) Openness to self-examination and commitment to self-growth (p. 12).

While the Standards selection criteria relate to individuals applying for entry level preparation, most likely a master's program, it would seem logical that the fulfillment of the aforementioned "potential", "aptitude", and "commitment" would provide direct evidence that a doctoral applicant had achieved "successful entry level preparation and experience". Determining methods of evaluating these criteria was recently a subject of study at the University of South Carolina.

Commonly called upon by counselor educators as a basis on which to make doctoral admissions decisions are grade point averages, various test scores, letters of recommendation, personal interviews, professional experience, and previous major (Cimmetad & Goldsmith, 1973). All appear to have a place in the evaluation process. It was agreed by the counselor education faculty here at the University of South Carolina that of these, the personal interview had the most to offer as a means of assessing the above mentioned Standards selection criteria. Recognized, however, was the need for an instrument to assist faculty members in evaluating applicants. The authors were asked to develop this instrument. The following interview rating scale is the result.

The Doctoral Interview Rating Scale

The Doctoral Interview Rating Scale (DIRS) is composed of six areas which enable the interviewer to rate an applicant's fulfillment of each of the Standards selection criteria. DIRS areas I, and II, General Interpersonal Performance and Interpersonal Behavior relate to the Standards selection criterion 1. The other DIRS areas correspond to the Standards criteria as follows: Area III, Counseling Knowledge, to selection criterion 2; Area IV, Professional Attitude, to criterion 3; Area V, Supervision Attitude, to criterion 5; and Area VI, Supervision Behavior, to criterion 6. In addition, the DIRS includes Area VII, Overall Impression (Accept/Reject), and Area VIII, Comments.

Development

In conducting a review of the professional literature, the authors noted an instrument, the Counselor Evaluation Rating Scale (Myrick & Kelly, 1971), which was recently the subject of a factor analysis by Loesch and Ricker (1977). Six primary factors were identified. It was the observation of the present authors that these six factors appeared to correspond with the selection criteria of the Standards.

The Counselor Evaluation Rating Scale was originally designed to evaluate a counselor trainee's performance in a practicum or internship situation, what could be considered the culmination of "entry level preparation and experience". Based on Loesch and Ricker's factor analysis, the authors proceeded in adapting this instrument to the doctoral admissions interview situation. Loesch and Ricker's analysis was based on ratings of 404 students pursuing either doctoral or educational specialist degrees

in counselor education. Their findings clearly showed the presence of six primary factors: (I) general counseling performance, (II) counseling behavior, (III) counseling knowledge, (IV) professional attitude, (V) supervision attitude, and (VI) supervision behavior.

The items selected for the DIRS are representative of those items loading highest on each of these six primary factors. Certain of the items, however, were modified or deleted due to difficulty in assessing the item under interview conditions. In addition, those areas related more specifically to the counseling situation (general counseling performance, counseling behavior, and counseling knowledge) were given preference in terms of number of items contributing to the total score. The preliminary scale was then distributed to counselor education faculty members for their review. It was suggested by the faculty that the seven-point Likert-type rating scale used in the Counselor Evaluation Rating Scale was not precise enough and that the six areas should be further explained.

In response to the faculty recommendations, the authors altered the scoring method to a five-point graphic scale, with behavioral statements defining points on the scale. It was felt this would lend more concreteness and uniformity of meaning to the scale steps. Also, the province of each area was explained with suggested modes of questioning offered where relevant. The final product is shown in Figure 1.

Insert Figure 1 about here

Administration and Scoring

The DIRS is a self-administered measure. Faculty note their evaluation of the applicant on each item on a five-point graphic scale with scores 1, 3, and 5 behaviorally defined. A total score for the ten individual items representing the six areas is obtained by summing individual item scores and averaging so as to determine the applicant's overall rating.

Reliability

A pilot study was conducted to determine the reliability of the DIRS. Eleven applicants for the doctoral program in counselor education were recently invited to be interviewed. A committee of faculty members met each of these individuals for a minimum of one hour, during which time the applicants were interviewed relative to the areas on the DIRS. Using a split-half reliability procedure (Spearman-Brown correction), a coefficient of .95 was found.

Implications

The results of the initial use of the DIRS have been encouraging. While it is understood that further research needs to be conducted, the DIRS has provided a standardized approach for evaluating doctoral applicants' performance in the personal interview situation. In addition, it has been an effective communication aid among faculty and to applicants as to strengths and deficiencies perceived during the interview. Finally, it gives the faculty a means with which to implement the guidelines set forth by the profession.

In conclusion, it is now suggested that the use of the DIRS or personal interview is the most valid, not only means of assessing doctoral

applicants' abilities and qualifications. Grade point averages, test scores, and other similar measures must also be considered. The use of the DIRS in the personal interview situation is but one part of the process. Still, it can be a most enlightening and therefore meaningful part of that process.

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Figure Caption

Figure 1 Note: Adapted from Myrick and Kelly, 1971.

Doctoral Interview Rating Scale

Name of Applicant _____
Date _____
Score _____

I. General Interpersonal Performance

This area reflects the applicant's ability to display a wide variety of characteristics such as comfort, awareness, confidence, sensitivity, mode of expression and general overall ability in an interpersonal situation.

1. Ability to be genuinely relaxed and comfortable in an interpersonal situation.

1	2	3	4	5
Is rigid and mechanical in manner		Shows some awkwardness, but is comfortable and relaxed the majority of the time		Is consistently relaxed and comfortable

2. Ability to be spontaneous and flexible, yet relevant.

1	2	3	4	5
Shows no spontaneity, nor is verbal behavior varied at all		Shows spontaniety, relevancy, and flexibility but lacks consistency in these skills		Is consistently relevant, spontaneous, flexible, and varied according to the situation

3. Self-confidence in establishing interpersonal relationships.

1	2	3	4	5
Is unable to exhibit any self-confidence		Shows evidence of self-confidence		Exhibits a maximum level of self-confidence

4. Awareness of content and feeling and ability to respond to it clearly and appropriately.

1	2	3	4	5
Is unaware of the content or the feeling of that being expressed; exhibited by a poor, unclear response		Shows some awareness of the content and feeling of that being expressed, being able to respond clearly and appropriately the majority of the time.		Shows total awareness of content and feeling of that being expressed, consistently responding in a clear and concise manner

II. Interpersonal Behavior

This area reflects the applicant's behavioral approach to an interpersonal situation. Taken into consideration should be eye contact, body position, and facial expression.

1. Ability to display appropriate attending behaviors.

1	2	3	4	5
Maintains little or no eye contact; body position and facial expression communicate little or no interest		Maintains satisfactory eye contact; body position and facial expression communicate interest		Maintains consistent eye contact; body position and facial expression communicate definite interest

III. Counseling Knowledge

This area reflects the applicant's ability to discuss and use theoretical counseling information. Suggested questioning for item #1 would involve asking the applicant to explain what is involved in the counseling process using the theoretical rationale of his/her choice. Depending on the proposed field of major interest of the applicant, suggested questioning for item #2 would involve a hypothetical situation relevant to the applicant's field being given and the applicant asked to develop a possible counseling strategy to follow specifying principles and methodology to be employed.

1. Ability to explain what is involved in counseling and discuss its objectives intelligently using a consistent rationale of human behavior.

1	2	3	4	5
Demonstrates little or no understanding of the counseling process		Demonstrates an understanding of the counseling process but is inconsistent in the use of a rationale of human behavior		Demonstrates an understanding of the counseling process and delineates this using a highly consistent rationale of human behavior

2. Knowledge of fundamental counseling principles and methodology.

1	2	3	4	5
Is unable to develop a coherent counseling strategy		Is able develop a coherent counseling strategy		Is highly competent in developing a coherent counseling strategy

IV. Professional Attitude

This area reflects the applicant's outlook on his/her own professional activities. This would include membership in professional organizations and purpose for pursuing the Ph.D. degree.

1. Interest in personal development and professional growth.

1	2	3	4	5
Takes no part in professional organizations and has little or no relevant awareness of a personal need for the Ph.D.		Belongs to professional organizations but takes little or no part in their activities; identifies relevant need for pursuing the Ph.D.		Active member in professional organizations; shows high level of professional maturity in providing a rationale for pursuing the Ph.D.

V. Supervision Attitude

This area relates to the applicant's approach to the supervision process. This reflects the applicant's ability to participate in the supervision process in an open, honest, and self-aware manner and to productively deal with feedback generated in the process. Suggested questioning would involve a hypothetical situation wherein the applicant is given constructive criticism by a supervisor. The applicant would then be asked to comment on how he/she would deal with this situation.

1. Openness to self-examination and ability to deal with the content and feeling derived from the supervisory process.

1	2	3	4	5
Closed to self-examination; unable to accept constructive criticism		Shows signs of being able to examine self and make use of constructive criticism		Is open to and sees self-examination and constructive criticism as valuable parts of a growth process

VI. Supervision Behavior

This area reflects the applicant's ability to form effective professional relationships, the consultant and consultee roles being especially important. Suggested questioning would pertain to the applicant's past experiences in this area and his/her views of these experiences. Hypothetical situations could also be presented for the applicant to comment on.

1. Ability to work with other personnel; seeks and considers as well as offers professional opinion when need arises.

1	2	3	4	5
Does not seek consultation Does not function as a consultant Is poor team worker		Uses consultants in some degree Is able to function as a consultant Is satisfactory team worker		Can use consultants in an appropriate manner Is an excellent consultant Is an excellent team worker

VII. Overall Impression

Based upon the abilities the applicant has displayed during this interview, does he/she meet the requirements for admission to the Ph.D. Program in Counselor Education?

ACCEPT _____ REJECT _____

VIII. Comments